

Final Report of the Town Meeting Family Care Study Committee

- The TMFCSC was established by the vote of the Town Meeting session of October 29, 2003 to see if there was evidence of support for the establishment of a child / family care service to allow more Amherst residents to participate as candidates and members of Amherst Town Meeting
- A questionnaire to survey residents of Amherst about this question was designed.
- The committee used this questionnaire to see if there was support for various options to help with family and childcare. 43 (20%) of Town Meeting members at the fall Town Meeting responded as did 28 parents attending PTO meetings. In addition, 9 Amherst residents, 7 of whom were parents, responded to questionnaires posted on the town website and in the libraries. The survey then was based on the responses of 80 Amherst residents.
- Based upon the survey results and the comments made by responders, we proposed Article 24 on this years' Warrant to establish a one-year pilot program of family care.
- Perhaps the strongest survey evidence for going forward with a pilot program was that 9 of 20 parents, who are not now Town Meeting members, indicated that they would consider running for Town Meeting if there were child and / or family care support. In addition another 8 indicted that they might "perhaps" consider running.
- By 65%, both Town Meeting members and parents at the PTOs supported a plan to provide a childcare at the Middle school during Town Meeting. 45% of Town Meeting members supported a stipend paid for by the town to provide child or family care in the home for Town Meeting members who needed such support. 63% of those at the PTOs and the Internet responders supported this proposal.
- While there was strong support for a roster of high school and college students to be provided to assist Town Meeting members with child and family needs, it was felt that by providing such a roster the town might assume a legal responsibility if some bad outcome occurred in the use of these students.
- There was support (57%) for couples running together for a single Town Meeting seat. We think that this might be considered in the future but did not put it forward in the Article.
- It was frequently mentioned that Town Meeting needed to end earlier to help parent participation.